DEMOCRATIC
GERMAN REPORT

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WHO LOADED KILLER'S GUN?

This historic photo shows the scene in the streets of Marseilles on October 9th 1934, a few seconds after a Macedonian gunman named Vladimir Georgieff had shot and killed King Alexander of Yugoslavia and M. Louis Barthou, French Foreign Minister.

The gunman pulled the trigger, but who organised the murder? Documents which have just been discovered in secret nazi archives, and published in Berlin, purport to show that the assassination was ordered by Hitler personally, and that the immediate organiser of the double murder was Captain Hans Speidel, then assistant to the German Military Attache in Paris. Today Hans Speidel, whom Hitler promoted to the rank of General, is commander of the NATO ground forces in the central European sector. The troops under his command include the British troops in Germany.

On page 115 of this issue GERMAN REPORT published facsimiles of two of the letters concerning the preparations for the double murder. These letters, and other documents, give the following picture of the plot:

At the end of August 1934, Hitler decided that it was necessary to do away with French Foreign Minister Louis Barthou, whose plans for a collective security agreement in Europe were a threat to Germany's aggressive aims. He signed two edicts ordering the mounting of an operation symbolically named "Teutonic Sword", and handed them over to Hermann Goering, nazi Air Minister, and one of his most reliable strong-arm men.

On September 1st 1934, Goering sent copies of these edicts to Hans Speidel, assistant to the German Military Attache in Paris, with orders that they should be destroyed after reading. A handwritten note at the foot of Goering's letter of instructions, in Speidel's handwriting, states "The edicts were noted and destroyed".

No copy of these secret edicts is known to have been preserved, but it is possible to reconstruct their main contents from subse-

(cont. on next page)

WHO LOADED KILLER'S GUN?

(cont. from preceding page)

quent events. Speidel immediately mobilised his agents in France, particularly one of his most efficient agents, a certain Hans Haack.

On October 1st, just one month after the plot had been initiated, agent Hans Haack was able to provide Speidel with full details of the security precautions which would be taken when King Alexander arrived in France for his state visit. A facsimile copy of this report is available in Berlin, but has not been printed here for reasons of space. Here is the full text of the report:

"Dear Speidel,

"At your request I have the following to report:

"The official ceremonies in connection with the state visit will be held in Paris. Barthou and General Georges will travel to Marseilles for the welcome ceremony.

"As a result of the decree signed on May 21st 1932 by President Lebrun, the Sûreté Nationale, under Controller-General Sisteron, is charged with maintaining order and security in Marseilles.

"Alexander will leave the ship in Marseilles. After the first points of the protocol have been concluded, Alexander will drive with Barthou and Georges in an open car from the Vieux Port to the Prefecture. On its journey through the city the car will drive through the main street of Marseilles, the Canebière, and the Rue Saint Ferréol. In front of the Prefecture there will be a welcoming ceremony, and Alexander will receive the plaudits of the populace. The square in front of the Prefecture and the Rue Saint Ferréol will be filled with people.

"The route laid down for the procession is divided into sectors, in which about 1300 police will watch over order and security. As the procession advances slowly, the protective cordon from the sector already covered will move forward in order to reinforce the security service in the neighbouring sector.

„The army will not be used for security purposes. According to de Laforcade the originally planned motor-cycle escort will not be used. I shall inform you about this later.

Yours, (signed) Hans Haack"

On receipt on this very thourough report, Speidel decided that "Operation Teutonic Sword" should be carried out in Marseilles. On October 3rd 1934 he reported the decision to Goering in Berlin, enclosing a copy of Herr Haack's report.

In the meantime he had been busy hiring the assassin. For this purpose he had the help of a certain Vanco Mihajlov or Mihaileff, a Macedonian terrorist who was in the pay of the nazi secret service. On October 3rd he reported to Goering in Berlin (see letter on opposite page) that "Wlado the Chauffeur" obviously identical with Vladimir Georgieff, the actual assassin, had been given his final instructions for the murder.

On October 9th 1934, just after four o'clock in the afternoon, a "tall heavily built, poorly clad man" broke through the police cordon, and fired ten shots from an automatic rifle into the car, killing King Alexander and Louis Barthou.

The assassin was lynched by the crowd, and died immediately. The man who, according to these documents, planned all the details of the murder, is today NATO commander in Europe.

*

The documents linking Speidel with the Marseilles assassination were made available to the international and West German press on July 18th. Despite the sensational nature of the charges made against one of the leading NATO commanders, they were almost entirely ignored by newspapers in West Germany and the western world generally.

Several French newspapers broke the conspiracy of silence, however. The leading liberal Paris newspaper "Le Monde" reported the disclosures fully on July 21st, at the same time casting doubt on the authenticity of the documents. The paper stated: "The French Government and the NATO governments have the means of informing themselves properly on this affair, and of ending this campaign if necessary. But if the facts disclosed should be confirmed, then they would have the duty to draw the necessary consequences as quickly as possible."

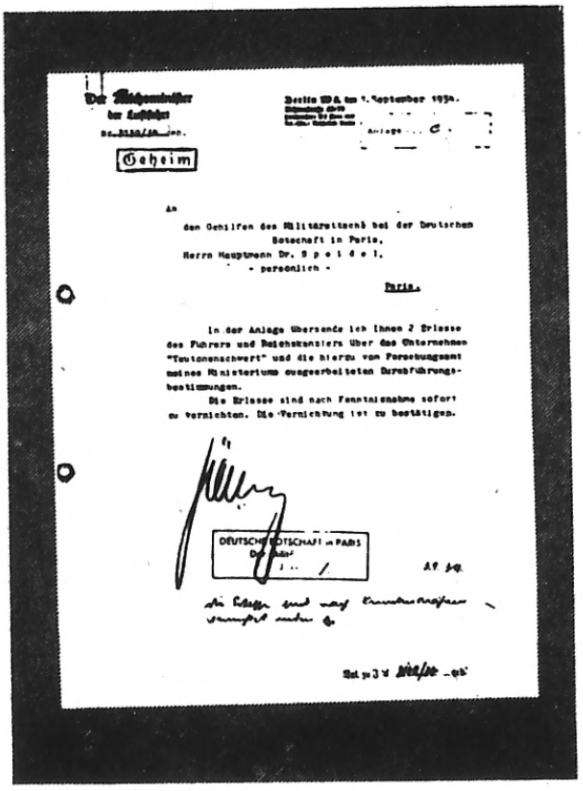
The left-wing Paris newspaper "Libération" stated on July 23rd: "The three documents raise very serious questions. Two of the documents are typed on official notepaper, and bear handwritten signatures. If they refer to something other than the double murder in Marseilles, then we should be given an explanation as to what they refer. If they are forged, then this should be easy to prove. Does Speidel, for instance, recognise his signature? If the documents are genuine, then this means that part of the French army is commanded by a man who is not only one of the main initiators of the armistice of 1940, who is not only responsible for the execution and deportation of many Frenchmen, but who was also one of those responsible for the murder of a member of our government and one of our guests ...

"Four days have passed since the publication of these documents. Speidel has said nothing. This silence must not continue. Silence is equivalent to confession of guilt. Hans Speidel, it is time for you to speak!"

APPEAL TO ALL PARLIAMENTS

The National Front of Democratic Germany, which published the "Speidel Documents", has appealed to all European parliaments and all people of good will to investigate the charges made against General Speidel, and to see that he is removed from his post as commander of NATO troops in the central sector in Europe. "The peace of Europe is menaced by people like Speidel and those who give him his orders" the appeal stated.

THE "SPEIDEL DOCUMENTS"



Reich Minister
of Aviation

Berlin W 8
Behrenstrasse 68–70
Telephone: U 2 Flora 0047
Telegrams: Reichsluft Berlin
September 1 1934

SECRET

Personal to the Assistant of the Military Attache,
German Embassy in Paris

Captain Dr. Hans Speidel

Paris

Attached I send you two edicts of the Fuehrer and Reich Chancellor on the operation "Teutonic Sword" and the relevant instructions worked out by the Research Department of my Ministry.

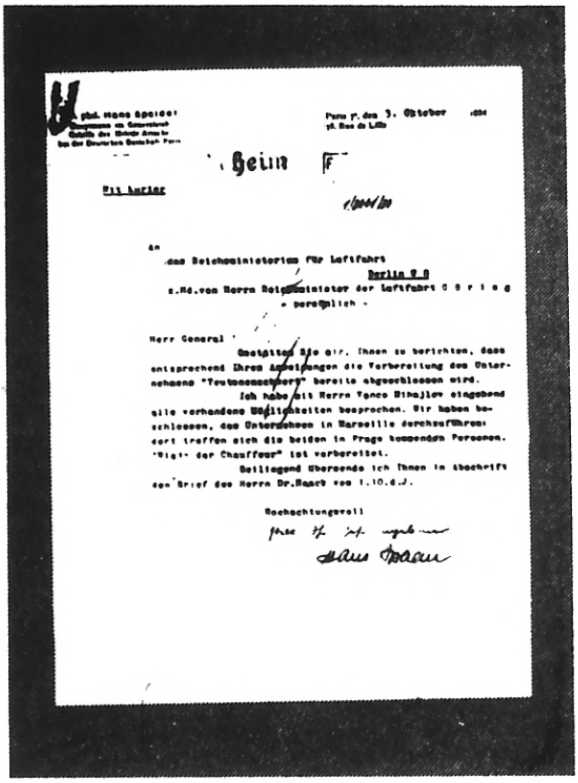
The edicts must be destroyed immediately after being noted. Destruction must be confirmed.

(signed) Goering

German Embassy in Paris
The Military Attache

3. 9. 34

The edicts were noted and destroyed. Sp.



Hans Speidel D. Phil.
Captain on General Staff

78 Rue de Lille
Paris 7°
October 3 1934

Assistant to Military Attache
German Embassy, Paris

SECRET

By messenger

Reich Ministry for Aviation, Berlin W 8
Personal to Reich Minister for Aviation Goering

Dear General,

Permit me to report that the preparations for operation "Teutonic Sword" have been completed in accordance with your instructions.

I have discussed thoroughly with Mr. Vanco Mihajlov all possibilities which present themselves. We have decided to carry out the operation in Marseilles: the two persons concerned will meet there. "Wlado the Chauffeur" has been instructed.

Attached please find a copy of the letter from Dr. Haack dated October 1st this year.

I beg to remain, etc.

(signed) Hans Speidel

ELECTION GUIDE

West Germany will go to the polls on September 15th to elect a new Federal Parliament. The West German electoral system is a complicated mixture of direct constituency election and proportional representation. Half of the members of parliament are elected, as under the British electoral system, by a simple majority of votes in each of 242 different constituencies; the other half are elected by proportional representation under a modified form of the d'Hondt system. Each voter has to complete two ballot forms: one for the direct constituency representative, and the other for the party list which he favours. A special "five percent clause" lays down that only those parties which receive at least five percent of the total vote are entitled to representation. This ruling does not, however, affect the members elected by direct vote.

On this page GERMAN REPORT presents a summary of the programmes of the main parties contesting the election.

Results of Previous West German General Elections

Party	Votes (1949)	Seats (1949)	Votes (1953)	Seats (1953)
CDU	7,359,084	139	12,440,799	244
SPD	6,934,975	131	7,939,774	150
FDP	2,839,920	52	2,628,146	48
GB/BHE	—	—	1,614,484	27
Communist Party	1,361,706	15	607,413	—
DP	939,934	17	897,952	15

N. B. The totals of seats held, given in the last column, do not always coincide with the details given in the party survey on this page, owing to the fact that a considerable number of members changed their party alliegance during the life of the parliament.

Christian Democratic Union (CDU)

This party, known as the Christian Social Union in Bavaria, was much the strongest party in the last general elections in 1953 and has 253 members in the present parliament. Under its chairman Konrad Adenauer, who has been Prime Minister every since the foundation of the West German Republic in September 1949, it has been mainly responsible for the rearmament of West Germany and its integration in NATO.

The official election programme of the party, published on May 15th 1957, had the following main points:

1. "The CDU strives for the reunification of Germany in peace and liberty ... general controlled disarmament including atomic weapons, the security of the free world through the strengthening of the Atlantic Alliance."

2. "The CDU opposes a revival of class warfare and confessional strife."

3. "The CDU believes in free enterprise ... and inner freedom through private property."

Social Democratic Party (SPD)

The Social Democratic Party, roughly equivalent to the British Labour Party, is the main opposition party in the present parliament, with 153 members. Its chairman is Erich Ollenhauer. Its election programme, published on June 15th, had the following main points:

1. "Foreign policy: Abolition of atomic weapons, world-wide disarmament agreement, a European security system achieved through an 'alliance of all with all', and guaranteed by the USA and the Soviet Union. This should be the first step towards an 'atomless zone' in Europe which should include both parts of Germany. Normalisation of relations with the countries of the eastern block."

2. "Defence policy: Abolition of conscription. A volunteer army to fulfil defence functions in the framework of a European security system."

3. "Reunification: The working out of new German proposals to the Big Four which will be imperative enough to bring them round the conference table."

4. "Economic policy: Stabilisation of prices, tariff reduction, a juster distribution of property, 'democratic control' of mining and the atomic industry ..."

Free Democratic Party (FDP)

The Free Democratic Party, a traditional "Liberal" party, under the chairmanship of Thomas Dehler, is the third largest party in the present parliament, with 37 members. At the beginning of the legislative period the party had 52 members, but 15 of these left in 1956 to form the "Free People's Party" which remained in coalition with the CDU, while the bulk of the party moved into a semi-oppositional position. Main points of the election programme of the FDP can be summarised as follows:

1. Foreign policy: A policy of relaxation of international tension "in accord with existing treaty commitments and in cooperation with the friendly nations".

2. Reunification: "Peaceful reunification with Central Germany (the German Democratic Republic, ed.) and the East German territories (former German territory now incorporated in Poland and the Soviet Union, ed.). This must be the first aim of our home and foreign policy."

3. Defence policy: "The FDP supports a military policy according with the political-geographic situation of the Federal Republic, the military situation, and the development of arms technique."

4. Social policy: Unlimited free enterprise in all fields. "The FDP rejects Marxism and all socialist experiments."

All-German Block (GB/BHE)

This party, generally known as the "Refugee Party" bases itself mainly upon "have-not" middle class voters, mainly those re-settled in West Germany from eastern Europe. Main plank in its election programme is the call for the return to Germany of territories detached after the Second World War, and the integration in Germany of the Sudeten area of Czechoslovakia. The party calls for "military preparedness and respect for the fine traditions of German soldierliness".

Free People's Party (FVP)

This group, which split away from the FDP in 1956, has 15 representatives in the present parliament. It has expressed no very coherent election policy, but is generally regarded as standing somewhat to the right of Chancellor Adenauer's CDU. In many parts of West Germany the FVP is expected to enter into electoral pacts with the German Party (see below).

German Party (DP)

The German Party is a right-wing conservative party, with 17 representatives in the present parliament. It has its main support in a handful of constituencies in North Germany, and very little support in other parts of the country.

It May Look Boring But -

YOU MUST READ THIS PAGE

East & West Table Plans for Germany's Future

In the last week of July, two new plans for the future of Germany were presented to the world. The eastern plan, drawn up by the Government of the German Democratic Republic and published on July 27th in East Berlin, proposed that East and West Germany should take the first steps to decrease tension by agreeing to the following moves:

1. **The banning of atomic arms in both parts of Germany.**
2. **West Germany should leave NATO, East Germany should leave the Warsaw Pact, and they should reach agreement on troop strength in both halves of the country.**
3. **The four powers should be requested to withdraw their troops from Germany by stages.**

The East German proposal envisaged that agreement on these points should be the first step to a loose confederation between the two German states, which should then develop in the direction of full reunification.

The East German proposal was promptly rejected by spokesmen of all important political parties in West Germany.

The western plan, drawn up by the three western powers together with the West German Government, made no practical proposals for reunification except for reiterating that "free all-German elections" should be held. Most of the points of the 12-point plan were devoted to defining the relations of a reunited Germany with NATO. The plan suggested that Soviet troops should leave Germany but made no suggestion that western troops should also go.

Political observers in Berlin regarded points eleven and twelve of the plan (see next page) as most important, since they would give the western powers the excuse for vetoeing any realistic disarmament plan for Europe, and would give the West Germany Government the right to veto any plan for the neutralisation of Germany, for mutual air-inspection, and so on.

1. The East German Proposals

Here are the main points from the declaration issued by the Government of the German Democratic Republic on July 27 th:

"There can be no doubt that at the moment the reunification of Germany presents more difficulties than at any time in the twelve years since the collapse of the fascist Reich. The governments of the Soviet Union and the German Democratic Republic warned in good time that the revival of German militarism through West German adherence to NATO and the introduction of conscription would lessen the prospects for the reunification of the two German states, but despite these warnings the Adenauer Government took this path. The introduction of an atomic war policy in West Germany has created an impassable obstacle to reunification.

"Today there exist in Germany two states with completely different political aims: on the one side West Germany, deployment area for atomic war, and a state which is actively opposed to disarmament and actively working towards hostilities; and on the other side the German Democratic Republic, the first anti-imperialist German state, forging ahead towards socialism, a state which is becoming increasingly important as a factor in guaranteeing European peace . . .

"In the past years the Soviet Union, alone amongst the great powers, has appealed to the (West German) Federal Government to follow a peaceful policy, and has made concrete proposals for the solution of the German problem. The last such proposals were made in notes sent in April and June 1957. The three western powers, on the other hand, have encouraged the restoration of the old forces of imperialism and militarism in West Germany, and they bear great responsibility for the course of developments which has led to a new German nationalism and chauvinism. It cannot be denied that this development has recieved considerable support from the stationing of the forces of these imperialist states in West Germany.

"The policy of the government in Bonn is marked today by efforts to make the Federal Republic the leading European military power in the framework of the aggressive NATO pact. The demand for a causal connection between disarmament and reunification is intended to prevent both disarmament and peaceful reunification.

The declaration of the Federal Government that the reunification of Germany is a matter for the Four Powers shows the intention of destroying the right and the desire of the German people for reunification.

"The Government of the German Democratic Republic, on the other hand, believes that the reunification of the two German states, and the creation of a united, democratic and peaceable state, to which imperialist war policy is foreign, is a matter for the German people themselves. The Government of the German Democratic Republic has held this point of view for years ... and has repeatedly made proposals in accordance with the ruling situation.

(The Government declaration then described some of the measures towards socialism and true democracy taken since the end of the war in the territory of the German Democratic Republic.)

"Two completely different sorts of state exist today on German territory. One of these states is of a highly capitalist, imperialist and militarist character; the other has laid the foundations of socialism in its social and economic life and is forging ahead towards socialism. Under such circumstances these two states cannot be mechanically be brought together in one state from outside through all-German elections ...

"The problem of the national reunification of Germany can only be solved by an understanding between the Germans themselves, and by negotiations between the governments of the two German states. This presents the question of the concrete path to be taken to bring the two German states nearer to each other step by step, on a basis which will make possible the creation of a united, democratic, peaceable and anti-imperialist German state.

"Such a concrete path would be the creation of a confederation between the German Democratic Republic and the German Federal Republic on the basis of a treaty valid in international law.

"For a start this confederation would not need to create an independent state power superior to the two states, and there would be no hegemony of one state over the other. An All-German Council, composed of the represenatives of the parliaments in both parts of Germany, and of a consultative character, could propose and decide measures to bring the two German states nearer to each other step by step.

"The first step towards a confederation could be an agreement between the German Democratic Republic and the German Federal Republic on a joint policy with regard to certain specific questions.

"We therefore propose:

1. An agreement on the banning of the stationing or manufacture of atomic bombs and weapons on German territory, and a ban on propaganda for atomic war.

2. The two German states should leave NATO and the Warsaw Pact respectively, conscription should be abolished, and agreement should be reached on troop strength on both sides.

3. A joint request or separate requests to the Four Powers that they should, at an early date, withdraw their troops step by step from the whole of Germany.

"An agreement on these important questions could be the starting point for the confederation between sovereign and independent German states. This could lead to further discussions in the field of economic ties, customs and currency questions, transport and postal questions, questions connected with the status of Berlin, and the question of cancelling the ban on democratic parties and organisatios in West Germany. The recommendations and decisions made mutually by the confederation authorities should only be carried out voluntarily by the two German states, without any elements of compulsion. In the following period further steps toward the reunification of Germany would also be necessary.

"In order not to make the reunification of the two German states more difficult, the Government of the German Democratic Republic does not insist at present on the discussion of problems connected with the future development of West Germany or the German Democratic Republic. At the same time the Government of the German Democratic Republic publicly declares that it naturally regards the peaceful, democratic and socialist path as the only right path for the development of the whole of Germany ...

"A German confederation would be a decisive move against the partitioning of Germany, and would open up the further perspective of a united, peaceful and democratic Germany. Although the question of a controlled zone of limited armaments and the conclusion of an All-European collective security pact are independent of the creation of a German confederation, such a federation would make these steps easier, and thus counter the danger of a new world war.

"The Government of the German Democratic Republic calls on all Germans of good will to support the formation of a confederation as the only possible method of achieving a united democratic German state of peace.

"The Government of the German Democratic Republic appeals to all governments and peoples to aid the German people along the path to peaceful reunification demonstrated by the Government of the German Democratic Republic."

2. The Western Proposals

Here are the main points of the western plan for Germany, drawn up by the governments of the USA, France, Britain and West Germany, and published in West Berlin on July 29th:

1. "Justice demands that the German people should be given the chance to restore its national unity on the basis of freedem ... and the right to choose its own political, economic and social system."

2. "The reunification of Germany remains the joint responsibility of the Four Powers ... It also demands the active cooperation of the entire German people."

3. "There can be no peace treaty with Germany, and no stability in Europe so long as Germany is divided ... German reunification is the only healthy basis for lasting peace in Europe."

4. "Only a freely elected all-German government can take on responsibilities which will give confidence in

other countries and which will be recognised by the German people as just and binding."

5. "Such a Government can only be established by free elections to a National Assembly in the whole of Germany."

6. "There must be no discrimination against reunited Germany. Its liberty and security may not be limited by an imposed neutralisation or demilitarisation ..."

7. When Germany is reunited, the western allies will be ready to extend a security guarantee to Germany's neighbours.

8. "The western powers have never demanded that a reunited Germany should join NATO. The people of a reunited Germany will be able to decide, through their freely elected government, whether they will participate in the rights and duties of NATO."

9. If reunited Germany should join NATO, then the western powers are ready to give the Soviet Union and other eastern European states far reaching guarantees ... The western allies are ready to enter into a European security arrangement, under which they would derive no military advantages from the withdrawal of Soviet troops (from East Germany).

10. The western powers cannot allow the existence of NATO as such to be questioned.

11. "The reunification of Germany and the conclusion of a European security agreement would help in the achievement of a far-reaching disarmament agreement ... The western powers will participate in no disarmament agreement which could hinder the reunification of Germany."

12. "All disarmament measures in Europe must be agreed to by the European nations affected, and must take into account the close connection between German reunification and European security.

Communists: "VOTE SOCIALIST"

The banned Communist Party of West Germany has appealed to all its supporters to vote for the Social Democratic candidates at the West German general election on September 15th.

The Communist Party appeal stated in part:

"The Communist Party calls on all its members and supporters to vote for the Social Democratic Party, so that the Adenauer Party, the enemy of the working class and the entire nation, shall be defeated ... We Communists know that the electoral defeat of the Adenauer Party alone will not achieve the necessary basic change in the policy of the Federal Republic, and the social order here. Despite this we call for a Social Democratic victory in the election and the formation of a government headed by the Social Democrats.

"You must demand from the leadership of the Social Democratic Party a binding promise that after its electoral victory the Social Democratic Party will not enter into a coalition with the Adenauer Party, but will form a government which bases itself on the joint action of the working class and the cooperation of all national democratic forces."

The electoral appeal of the Communist Party criticised the fact that the election programme of the Social did not insist on West Germany leaving NATO, that it did not outline a thorough-going programme of socialisation, and that the leaders of the Social Democratic Party were still not ready to conduct negotiations with the German Democratic Republic on the question of German reunification.

Despite these weaknesses, the appeal stated, the most urgent task today was to work together for the defeat of Adenauer Party and its backers, the militarists and bankers.

The Communist Party in West Germany was banned on August 17th 1956. At the last general election in West Germany on September 6th 1953 the party polled over 600,000 votes, and provincial elections held later but before the ban showed a general increase in the Communist poll.

B & K for Berlin

Soviet Prime Minister Bulganin and Communist Party Secretary Krushchov will visit the German Democratic Republic during August, it was announced in Berlin on July 23rd.

The two Soviet leaders previously paid a short visit to Berlin in 1955 after the Geneva Conference, but this will be their first full-scale state visit.

"It's Up To The Germans"- Bulganin

The unification of Germany is a matter for the Germans, Soviet Prime Minister Bulganin reiterated in a letter to British Prime Minister Macmillan on July 20th. Mr Bulganin's letter also dealt with questions of disarmament and Anglo-Soviet trade. Here are the main passages from his letter dealing with the German problem:

"We consider that the unification of Germany is the business of the two German states existing at present, on whom it is incumbent to conduct talks between themselves on this. There is therefore scarcely any serious need to address a series of questions to each other on this theme.

"As far as the USSR, Great Britain, France and the United States are concerned, we consider that these four Powers, according to international agreements, bear the responsibility that Germany shall never again threaten her neighbours or the preservation of world peace. If the international obligations which one has accepted are to be respected, then one should not urge either of the two German states to increase its military strength or to acquire weapons of mass destruction.

"You ask whether the Soviet Government agrees that the unification of Germany is desirable at the first opportunity. Yes, the Soviet Union agrees with this.

"We are beginning to wonder whether the policy now pursued by the western Powers of reviving German militarism and of military alliance with the revenge-seeking forces in West Germany is not some kind of new variation of the Munich policy which in its time cost the peoples of Europe, including the people of Britain, so dear."

De-Centralisation

Far-reaching plans for the decentralisation of socialised industry in the German Democratic Republic are now being discussed by the East German Government, planning experts and industrial leaders.

Main aim of the plan, first mooted at a meeting of the Central Committee of the Socialist Unity Party late in July, is to cut down the over-centralised and sometimes bureaucratic control of most branches of socialist industry, at present concentrated in the industrial ministries in Berlin.

Fuller details of the plan, which promises to lead to more local initiative at the factory and district level, will be published in an early issue of GERMAN REPORT.

BERLIN NOTEBOOK

By John Peet

With the coming of the holiday season I have had the usual flood of letters from readers, particularly readers in Britain, who ask whether they can make holiday trips to the German Democratic Republic, and if not, why not.

It is, I think, a fair question, and I must say right at the outset that I am not satisfied that the competent authorities here have done all they could have done to provide facilities for tourists from western countries. Last year there were a number of trips for British tourists through the Republic, but this year for some reason, and I have not been able to ascertain where the fault lay, the plans appear to have fallen through.

But the provision of a limited number of guided tours is not the real answer to the question. People in Britain want to know why they cannot just pack their bags, buy a ticket, and take the train to Leipzig, Dresden, or anywhere else in Democratic Germany, in the same way as they can travel, for instance, to West Germany, France, or most other countries in western Europe, without troubling to get a visa.

Here, of course, we come to the core of the problem. Tourist travel in most of West Europe is so relatively easy today not because of the high-mindedness of the governments concerned, or anything of that sort, but because the governments of the various countries concerned have concluded agreements for the mutual waiving of visa formalities. The traveller from London can go to Bonn so easily, without a visa, because the British government has agreed to let the traveller from Bonn go to London equally easily without a visa.

Now what is the situation with regard to the German Democratic Republic? Not only has the British Government failed to conclude a no-visa travel agreement with the Government of the Democratic Republic in Berlin, but even refuses to recognise that such a government exists. The Government of the German Democratic Republic is ready and willing to enter into normal relations with Britain at any time: the British Government is unwillling.

So if you want to visit the German Democratic Republic, and find you can't, then please don't blame the authorities here. The blame falls entirely on the British authorities, who continually clap their telescope to their blind eye and proclaim that German Democratic Republic does not exist.

And incidentally, please don't forget that the difficulties work both ways. I know of quite a number of citizens of the Democratic Republic who wanted to visit Britain. They were unable to go because they were refused visas by the British immigration authorities. Incidentally, I have not been able to obtain any exact figures, but it is my guess that considerably more British citizens have, in fact, received visas to visit Democratic Germany, despite all the difficulties, than citizens of Democratic Germany have received visas to visit Britain.

Which brings us, of course, to the question of who these people are who get visas to come to Democratic Germany. There are, of course, the many hundreds of businessmen who come every year to the great Leipzig Fair; and then there are the many delegations of M.P.s, trade unionists, cooperators and so on. All these groups are rather specialised, but I should like to mention in addition the Wels soccer team which was here recently, and the boxers from the Bristol "Patchway Amateur Boxing Club", who I am sorry to say went down to a 16 : 4 defeat in a boxing tournament against the East German Printing Trades Boxing Club on July 26th.

I came across another group of British visitors to the Democratic Republic recently in a place I did not really expect to find any compatriots: in a circus tent on Eeast Berlin's Alexander Platz. No, I don't mean Shetland ponies: I mean a group of skaters from all parts of Britain who appear in an ice-show which forms part of the circus. There are twelve of them altogether, including Ken Bailey, a one-time world champion skater.

I had a chance to talk to one of the group, and it was quite interesting to hear how the Democratic Republik looks from the perspective of the circus ring, and the comfortable caravans in which the circus performers travel from town to town.

"We get looked after so well" said my informant, a chorus-girl on skates, who comes from Glasgow. "The caravans are wonderful, but its the little things that count too. I had my birthday a few days ago, and I was terribly surprised to get a big bouquet from the management. Then there's a canteen where we get a very decent meal very cheaply, though most of us in the English group prefer to do our own cooking in our caravan: I find the meat we get here is better quality than what we usually get at home.

"Then there's a club caravan with a bar: that's very popular. But what I like best in the school caravan. They really do everything for the circus children. The teacher there speaks four different languages so she can really look after the children, who come from all over.

"We have two performances a day, in the afternoon and in the evening, so we haven't really been able to see much of the country; but they arrange bus excursions in the morning for all the performers who want to go if we are near anything interesting. When we were at Weimar they took us to see the site of the nazi concentration camp at Buchenwald: I couldn't go, but it was so horrifying that some of the girls from our group who went were quite sick when they came back.

"And they look after us very well if we get ill too. Two of our girls have been in hospital, and one of the boys is in having an operation now: we pay health insurance out of our wages, but it's very well worth it."

My informant had some criticisms too: "The audiences are very good, and they applaud a lot, but we don't get anyone round the back waiting to take us out to dinner" she said. "And most of the clothes here are pretty drab. Most of the German girls don't seem to know how to make themselves look nice; they just put any old thing on. And the ruins: everywhere we go we see ruins. Why don't they get a move on and clear them up?"

I asked her what she thought of the rest of the circus show. "It's really good" she said ."It could go on anywhere. There are people from all over in it. There's twelve of us from Britain, an Australian, two Dutchmen, two Belgians, lots of Czechs and people, and a whole big family from West Germany: but they are real old circus people, they talk all sorts of languages, and don't really seem to come from anywhere in particular."

I asked her what she was buying here. "I thought of getting a tape recorder so I could practise my singing, but I don't think I will. I've started collecting dolls, there are such lovely ones to buy here. And of course I'm buying lots of nylon underwear: it's so cheap here, and very good."

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